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By-Potts, John F.

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The Negro colleges are often considered to be weak, but it is felt that conditions are now favorable for strengthening these institutions. Factors contributing to improvements are the national attention to the problems of Negro colleges, Federal education legislation, the general increase in college enrollment, and the heightened interest of business and industry in Negro graduates. However, the colleges must take the initiative to better prepare their graduates who are often ill-prepared in high schools. Also needed are long-range planning for a development program, interinstitutional cooperation to strengthen academic and instructional programs, and, finally, a willingness to change. (NH)

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Strengthening The Predominantly Negro College*

By John F. Potts

This is indeed both an historic and a happy occasion. Historic because this dedicatory program marks a great milestone in the history of Fayetteville State College. Today you are writing a new chapter in the history of this institution because you are dedicating three buildings which will almost double the value of your physical plant, marking the beginning of a current capital improvement program that will cost four and one-half million dollars.

While this is an historic occasion, it is also a happy one because there is blended in this program three essential ingredients of happiness. First, there is a recognition of achievement. To President Rulolph Jones, the members of the Board of Trustees, the architect, the contractor and all other individuals involved, I wish to say congratulations and commendations. In the words of the poet, "We live in deeds not years; in thoughts, not breaths; in feelings, not in figures on a dial." In other words, a man's work is judged by his deeds rather than the length of time he has lived. William James once wrote, "In the practical as in the theoretic life, the man whose acquisitions stick is the man who is always achieving and advancing while his neighbors simply hold their own." It is quite evident that Fayetteville State College is not just "holding its own." but is achieving and advancing as an institution of higher learning. These three buildings stand as lasting monuments to the combined efforts of many and should be a source of great satisfaction to all who are responsible for their being here.

The second ingredient of happiness blended into this program is the honor which is bestowed upon those for whom these buildings are being named. Few people experience the rare honor of having a building on a college campus perpetuate their name. In a sense this is a kind of immortality because people come and people go, but colleges like Tennyson's Brook, "go on forever." This kind of recognition and appreciation for services rendered in the past, brings joy and happiness to the honorees. It was Virgil who said, "While rivers run into the sea, while on the mountains shadows move over the slopes, while heaven feeds the stars, ever shall thy honor, thy name and thy praise endure."

The third of these three happiness producing ingredients is service. These buildings are being dedicated to the service of humanity, to the cause of education and to the uplifting of mankind. These are indeed laudable and worthwhile objectives and represent the noblest ideals of mankind. The highest of distinctions is service to others, and these buildings will make that possible.

Since the addition of these new facilities will substantially strengthen Fayetteville State College, I have selected as a subject:

"STRENGTHENING THE PREDOMINANTLY NEGRO COLLEGE."

Whenever the word "strengthening" is used, there is an implication of weakness. However, we must not in this case interpret this to mean that all the predominantly Negro colleges are weak institutions. These

*An address delivered at Fayetteville State College on November 20, 1966 in dedication of the Emil Rosenthal Classroom Building, the Zebulon B. Vance Hall and the Dunie A. Bryant Hall.

123 colleges and universities vary in quality and character as do other institutions which constitute American higher education. On any criteria commonly used to evaluate colleges such as faculty preparation, library facilities, curriculum and physical plant, some would rank high and some low. Nevertheless, if all of the institutions of higher education were ranked on the various factors by which institutions of higher education are measured, most of the Negro institutions would fall in the lower fifty percent.

Until comparatively recent years, the prospect of these colleges improving their positions and moving up to a higher category was very slim indeed for the following reasons:

1) Foundations and philanthropy in general were interested only in the stronger institutions, and the Negro colleges received few if any foundation grants of substantial gifts from wealthy philanthropists.

2) The agencies of the Federal Government, especially the National Science Foundation, gave most of their financial support to the prestige colleges and universities.

3) Alumni support of the stronger colleges was substantial while it was negligible for the Negro colleges.

4) Business and industry at that time were most interested in the graduates of stronger colleges as far as employment opportunities were concerned.

5) Most of the colleges are located in a region which lags behind the rest of the nation in supporting higher education, primarily because of unfavorable economic conditions.

For all these reasons and some I have no doubt overlooked, the plight of the predominantly Negro college, with the possible exception of those which are state supported, seemed somewhat hopeless indeed. However, during the past five years there have been some new developments which are causing the pendulum to start swinging in the other direction. These factors are ushering in the dawn of a new day for these neglected colleges; and if the opportunities which they afford are taken immediately, this could mean the difference between quality and mediocrity in these institutions.

Permit me to mention a few of these encouraging developments:

1) National attention has been focused on the problems of the Negro colleges.

Most of you, I am sure, have read Earl J. McGrath's book entitled, "The Predominantly Negro Colleges and Universities in Transition," published in 1965. This study provided an overview of the characteristics, the needs and the prospects of the Negro institutions, and the findings of this study were widely disseminated and widely read. Since the entire project was underwritten by the Carnegie Corporation, complimentary copies of the book were sent to individuals who influence attitudes, public opinion and even legislation. Just as Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" aroused the conscience of America against slavery, this book focused the attention of the nation upon the needs and the potential of these colleges, and aroused considerable national interest. I would like to quote from two passages of the book to substantiate this point:

"At the very outset," says McGrath, "therefore, it should be said that anyone who thinks that a significant percentage of them can be substantially helped by an ex-

penditure of a few million dollars sadly deludes himself. The presently predominantly Negro colleges will need several hundred million dollars in the next five or ten years merely to keep step with the growing needs of their potential student bodies and the unprecendented advancements in higher education. The full efforts of individuals, corporations, philanthropic groups, foundations, and the state and Federal Governments will be required to reach the goal of providing a better higher education for the Negro youth, and for their white contemporaries who will increasingly attend these institutions. Anything less than such efforts will result in continuing restrictions nearly as demeaning and privational as segregation itself. And the time to begin to eradicate the present inadequacies in service is now, not five or ten years hence when several additional generations of young Americans will have been denied a suitable higher education and the social, economic, and cultural benefits flowing from it."

McGrath further states, "The predominantly Negro institutions are attempting to serve the nation as best they can under serious handicaps. Their plight is not unique, since other American colleges have had and have overcome similar problems; notwithstanding the higher quality and the promise of a few Negro institutions of higher education the inadequacies of the group as a whole are ominously serious. Today the world measures a civilization by its treatment of all its citizens, particularly its minority groups. The United States is now being inexorably judged by its treatment of its Negro citizens. The status of these citizens in our society will in large measure be determined by their educational advantages. Equity and prudence require that the doors of educational opportunities in the predominantly Negro colleges be thrown wide open to all and that the education they provide match that available elsewhere in quality and variety.

The day after the McGrath report was released the National Council of Churches held a conference for administrators and board members of the predominantly Negro colleges to discuss the recommendations of the report. Many other meetings were held across the nation, and several foundations have under written research grants for further investigation of Negro institutions of higher education. Probably, the most significant consultation was the White House Conference of 1965 when Dr. McGrath was invited to give information relating to higher education of Negroes.

It is also appropriate to point out here that the National Educational organizations, especially the American Council on Education and the Association of Higher Education of the NEA, supported this effort by establishing Commissions on Equality of Educational Opportunity, urging research and discussing this problem at their annual conventions.

A number of the stronger colleges located in the North and Middle West have established a "companion relationship" with some of the predominantly Negro colleges in the South to help improve the situation.

2) Another encouraging development is the increase in legislation which favors the Negro college.

Although Negro colleges have received benefits from some of the earlier pieces of legislation, especially the College Housing Loan Program, it was not until the Higher Education Acts of 1963 and 1965 were passed that these colleges were substantially strengthened. The first act provided grants and loans for libraries, science build-

ings and classroom facilities. The second act provided funds for strengthening libraries, purchasing equipment, strengthening developing institutions, and providing financial aid to students. Many Negro colleges have already received grants under the "Developing Institutions" section of this act and it is significant to note that the appropriations for this phase of the program were increased from $5 million this year to $30 million next year.

Negro colleges have also been reluctant to increase their fees because they did not want to "price" their students out of an education. Now that $446 million have been made available through Educational Opportunity Grants, NDEA Loans and Work-Study Programs, the colleges can obtain much needed additional funds from student fees to help finance their programs.

The Office of Economic Opportunity has also funded several programs in excess of $25 million which significantly supports some of the Negro colleges. The Upward Bond Projects alone amounted to some $20 million, and there were other projects similar to the one we have on our campus which we call a College Preparatory Center.

3) Still another encouraging development is the unprecedented increase in student enrollment in college.

Even without the special attention now being focused on the Negro college and the favorable legislation from which they are benefitting, the sheer pressure of numbers alone would indicate that all except the exceptionally weak colleges keep their doors open. When we consider that enrollment in college will jump from three and one-half million to seven million in 1975, it will require all of the existing Negro colleges and many other new institutions to accommodate the young people who seek and deserve the advantages of higher education. Under these conditions it would be neither economical nor in the national interest to permit any colleges with future potential to discontinue. Instead, they must be preserved and strengthened.

The need for these colleges is even more apparent when we consider that even though they enroll less than three percent of all college students in the nation, this enrollment comprises more than fifty percent of all the Negroes enrolled in institutions of higher learning. It is also significant to note that in 1963 the Negro represented eleven percent of the population but only 4.4 percent of the nation's college students. Only thirty percent of all college-age youth of both races in the South are attending college as compared with forty percent for the nation. We will never improve our relative position to say nothing of catching up if we fail to strengthen the existing colleges in this area. In some states like South Carolina, this percentage of college-age Negro students in college is as low as ten percent, and this helps to explain why there is such a low percentage of students in college in the Southern Region. In other words, to improve the South's position we must not only increase the number of persons attending college but also significantly increase the total number of Negroes enrolled therein.

4) Another encouraging development is that business and industry are now interested in the predominantly Negro college.

Because of the Civil Rights demonstrations and the legislation which followed them, business and industry are seeking qualified Negro college graduates to fill responsible positions in their organizations. There was a time when representatives

from business and industry limited their recruiting to the Mason-Dixon Line. Now they are visiting the colleges in the Deep South and in the entire Southern Region, and in some instances, are actually giving the Negro graduate preferential treatment because they want to comply with the provisions of the Civil Rights Act. Many of them are seeking to comply because they believe that it is helpful to their business and that it is in the best interest of the nation. Others are doing it merely to meet the letter of the law. Whatever the reason, they have significantly helped the predominantly Negro college not only by providing employment opportunities for the graduates of these colleges, but also by making significant contributions to the support of them.

Other encouraging signs are the changes which are occurring in the Southern Region.

There are a number of changes taking place in the South which are making their impact upon this problem. The integration of schools in the South will not only remove the barriers which have made it difficult for the white and Negro colleges to collaborate in the past, but will also increase the number of white students and teachers in the former all-Negro colleges. This will hasten the day when we can stop referring to a college as a Negro college or a predominantly Negro college, but a college "period."

The industrialization of the South, too, will continue to make the picture brighter economically. As the economy of the region improves, revenues for the support of education will increase, and the rise in our per capita income will enable more families to send more young people to college.

The Southern Regional Education Board must also be given special commendation for the recommendations which it made for the improvement of education in this region especially higher education. These are too numerous to mention at this time. The Regional Education Laboratory of the Carolinas and Virginia will make, I think, a very valuable contribution to the strengthening of all colleges in these states as will the Education Improvement Projects of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

These developments which I have mentioned are all very favorable indeed for the predominantly Negro college and will substantially strengthen them if the leadership of these colleges, both administrative and academic, is willing to accept the challenges which these developments provide. Someone has said that there are three kinds of people in the world: "Those who make things happen; those who watch things happen and those who don't know what's happening." What is needed today in these colleges is the kind of leadership which will MAKE things happen. These favorable developments alone will not solve the problem. They will only provide a favorable climate and valuable financial assistance. The real job lies with the college itself, and these are some of the things that it must make HAPPEN:

1. There must be a substantial improvement in the preparation of our graduates.

I was very disturbed indeed to read this statistic in the November issue of the Southern Education Report. "Statistics show that the average college board examination scores of freshmen entering Negro colleges in 1965 was 633 while the average scores of those entering predominantly white colleges was 957." These figures describe the situation in the North

Carolina colleges and would no doubt be lower in some of the other southern states. However, it is rather generally known that there is a 300 point difference in the College Board scores made by the Negro freshmen and the white freshmen. While this is not the fault of Negro colleges, it does pose a tremendous problem because we must take students who have experienced cultural deprivation and prepare them in the short span of the college experience, to compete on a basis of equality with other American college students. But whatever it takes that is what we must do because we cannot graduate them until they are prepared. There is no place in college for social promotion. Our goal has to be high performance. Not only does the future of the predominantly Negro college depend upon this, but also the future of our graduates as well. There are some colleges which feel that it is beneath them to devote any of their time to remedial or compensatory work. However, until such a time as a better product is passed on to us, we have no alternative but to provide the academic strengthening these students require before giving them college-level work.

2. The second thing that the leadership of the predominantly Negro college must make happen is *long-range planning.*

The kind of planning about which I speak involves not only planning for physical facilities such as we are concerned with today, but also planning the curriculum and forecasting the financial needs. The predominantly Negro colleges are now in a somewhat favorable position, but this may not last longer than five years (ten years at the most). By that time we must be strong enough to stand on our own feet with the normal support which other colleges are now receiving. This preferential treatment will not last and we must begin now to plan for the day when it will be discontinued. The next five years will be the most critical and decisive. Long-range planning is the only solution because it includes all of the aspects of a good development program. You may remember the story of the mountaineer who said he could read figures but he could not read letters, and whenever he saw a sign on the road, he could always tell "how 'fer'" but not "where to." The time has come for the predominantly Negro colleges to know not only "how 'fer'" but "*where to.*" Our purpose, our mission, our anticipated size, academic program and income should all be given very serious consideration.

3. The third thing that must happen is *inter-institutional cooperation.*

In our long-range planning we should also consider the possibility of cooperative programs. This may take several forms. It may consist of a joint plant between a cooperating institution and a developing institution, or it may consist of two or more developing institutions forming what has been described as a college consortium. For the small colleges (and most of the predominantly Negro colleges are), this offers an opportunity to provide an academic program which will be stronger than any one college can provide. This was one of the recommendations included in the McGrath Report, and there are several good examples of inter-institutional cooperation being carried out now. Even many stronger colleges are now collaborating. The basic purpose is to raise the quality of instruction by sharing the facilities and personnel. If colleges which are in a much better financial position that the predominantly Negro find this an advantageous development, we should certainly give this our serious consideration.

4. The final consideration is the unwillingness to change.

I realize that this is one of the most difficult of all the points which I have mentioned because it is well recognized that one of the most difficult of all groups to accept change is that engaged in higher education. Permit me to quote from the McGrath Report: "Now a whole series of social changes are breaking upon colleges —among them, the civil rights movement, an occupational revolution and technological unemployment, increased migration and urbanization, the wave of students from the postwar baby boom, and severe shortages of qualified teachers. Together they make rapid changes imperative throughout our system of higher education, but among the Negro institutions the rate of adaptation must be accelerated far beyond that in other institutions which in the main are already further advanced."

All of the higher education like the society which it serves and strives to improve, has undergone many significant changes in recent years but the predominantly Negro institutions face an even greater challenge of change because most of them must wrestle with the more serious problems of inadequate financial support integrating staff and student bodies, upgrading faculty and curricula, enlarging and improving libraries, providing more adequate student services, acquiring more up-to-date instructional equipment and building more and better physical facilities. For most of these colleges, changes must come with greater rapidity to survive the stiff competition from those institutions of higher learning not similarly handicapped.

One of the instructional changes we must face is a wider use of the new media of communication in higher education. The Association of Higher Education of the NEA has recently published a book entitled, *New Media in Higher Education,* which deals with such innovations in instruction as electronic reading speech and language Laboratories, Educational Television, Tele-Lectures and Video tapes. Programmed instruction and team-teaching were also mentioned. We are concerned both with new media and new methods of teaching because technology is changing some teaching theories. The entire program of the American Council on Education last month was focused upon improving college teaching by placing special emphasis on the new teaching aides and the evaluation of teaching methods. The predominantly Negro college must become more familiar with these new techniques and media. Change has always been a part of man's history. To resist it is to invite disaster because the alternative to change is stagnation.

In conclusion, I wish to again congratulate Fayetteville State College for demonstrating such tangible evidence of progress by dedicating these three buildings today. You have reached another milestone in your long history of service to the state of North Carolina and the Southern Region. As you face the future remember the words of James Russell Lowell:

"New occasions teach new duties;
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still and onward
Who would keep abreast of truth."

DR. JOHN F. POTTS, PRESIDENT
Voorhees College
Denmark, South Carolina